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Tradition and Transition: Amish Mennonites and Old Order Amish, 1800-1900

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Protestant white folks really add up to the "popular mood" of Gilded Age America is a good deal more problematic. Saum's research, which at first appears prodigious, is limited in still other ways. By my count, his bibliography lists 277 manuscript collections located in fourteen states. Iowa is well represented in the ten collections that he cites from the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City, and references to the state are scattered throughout his book. However, most of Saum's unpublished sources come from repositories in midwestern, southern, and plains states, a regional bias that further erodes his claim to have captured the national ethos.

That Saum's reach may have exceeded his grasp should not detract from his considerable accomplishments since "popular mood" is probably a will-o'-the-wisp anyway. He has written a wonderful book filled with challenging insights, a work that will profit both scholars and lay people alike.

Tradition and Transition: Amish Mennonites and Old Order Amish, 1800-1900, by Paton Yoder. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History no. 31. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991. 359 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$28.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY STEVEN D. RESCHLY, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

In 1874 the Amish *Diener Versammlung* (ministers' meeting) convened in John Conrad's barn just northeast of Wayland, Iowa. Up to a thousand people attended the conference assemblies. Between sessions, an Amish bishop from Ohio told Preacher Benjamin Eicher of Wayland that he should keep to Amish tradition and wear hooks-and-eyes on his coat instead of buttons—"a minister should wear clothing that would make it possible for anyone to distinguish between a preacher and a lawyer or banker." The change-minded Eicher later led his congregation out of the Amish fold to become General Conference Mennonites.

This story from Iowa fits nicely into Paton Yoder's pioneer history of nineteenth-century Amish church affairs. Yoder gathered disparate and fragmentary sources, combined them with some new caches of letters and documents, and created a coherent narrative of a little-known period in Amish and Mennonite history. He included every Amish community in his account, avoiding the tendency to focus only on the larger and more famous locations in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Yoder's book places Amish and Mennonites in Iowa and the Midwest into a context of North American Amish history and life.

The core of *Tradition and Transition* is the annual Amish ministers' meetings between 1862 and 1878. After an exposition of Amish beliefs and polity at mid-century, Yoder launches into close analysis of minutes and correspondence relating to the ministers' meetings. The yearly churchwide conferences were a desperate attempt to avoid the disastrous Great Schism, but the innovation had already failed by 1865, resulting in Amish-Mennonite and Old Order Amish streams. Disputes over dress standards, such as Eicher's buttons, contributed to the breach, along with location of baptism (stream or home) and the role of "preaching deacons" in the Amish leadership team. The change-minded Amish-Mennonites merged with the Mennonite church in the twentieth century, while the tradition-minded Old Order Amish still exist, a highly successful and expanding subculture.

In Iowa, responses to the separation ranged across the spectrum. The Davis County and Eicher (Washington County) congregations became General Conference Mennonite; the Henry-Washington County Amish became Amish-Mennonite and eventually Mennonite; and the Johnson-Washington-Iowa County community retained an Old Order element along with Mennonites and several steps in between. Yoder worked hard to incorporate midwestern Amish communities into his account, at one point discussing pioneer Iowa bishop Jacob Swartzendruber's letters to the ministers' meetings in 1863 and 1865 regarding Civil War commutation fees and other issues.

Tradition and Transition is a good addition to the growing literature on Amish communities, and offers one of the few historical studies, as opposed to sociological and anthropological investigations. For more extensive treatment of Amish and Mennonite history in Iowa, Melvin Gingerich's book, *The Mennonites in Iowa* (1939), still provides the most information, updated in the 1975 study by Elmer and Dorothy Schwieder, *A Peculiar People: Iowa's Old Order Amish*. But these works should now be supplemented with the narrative framework developed by Yoder.

Yoder's work would benefit from several maps to help locate the scattered Amish communities. The extensive notes refer to a bewildering variety of primary and secondary sources and need the organization imposed by a bibliography to be more useful to scholars. The few photographs are well chosen, leading the reader to wish for more. Above all, the Amish story related by Yoder is self-contained and needs to be more in touch with historiographical trends in rural and frontier history, to cite but two examples. In many ways, the book points beyond itself toward future research by hinting at unexplored topics and revealing sources for further reading.

New Amish communities continue to spring up in Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin. Tourism is growing among midwestern Amish settlements. Yoder's book will help interested readers understand the richness of Amish history, avoiding tourist notions of quaintness and images of "living museums." The Amish are not representatives of a lost past, but users of their history in creating a viable alternative way to live in the modern world. Yoder makes it less possible to consider the Amish a static, never-changing ethnoreligious society.

Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York, by Nancy Grey Osterud. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991. ix, 303 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$42.50 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY GLENDA RILEY, BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

In *Bonds of Community*, Nancy Osterud examines the lives of farm women in New York's Nanticoke Valley, especially during the latter portion of the nineteenth century. Osterud argues that these women adopted different strategies from many urban women; rather than accepting the doctrine of "separate spheres," they renegotiated "the terms of gender relations" to modify them "in a more symmetrical and egalitarian direction" (2).

Osterud begins with the settlement of Nanticoke Valley. Here she emphasizes the importance of kin networks. She moves on to the events of rural women's lives, especially courtship, marriage, child-bearing, and widowhood. Next, she considers how work structured women's relationships with their husbands and with other women. In the concluding section she demonstrates that social activities brought women and men together rather than enforcing their separateness.

Osterud analyzed diaries, letters, reminiscences, wills, church documents, censuses, and maps. She also explored Nanticoke Valley's hills and paths, handled artifacts, scrutinized photographs, and visited descendants of the families she studied. From this, she weaves a compelling tale of women and men who worked together, often interchanged tasks, and considered themselves collaborators in the family farm.

Throughout, Osterud writes of "mutuality," "reciprocity," and even "equality" between these women and their husbands. This is not the usual picture of farm marriages, and Osterud is quick to point out that the situation derived partially from the dairying industry that

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